Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 21,2022

Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD
860-509-7101

House Bill 5484, An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Private and Semipublic Well Testing

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports House Bill 5484, which establishes minimum required testing standards for all newly constructed private wells and semipublic wells, and requires testing of all private wells and semipublic wells that are associated with the sale, exchange, transfer, or purchase of real property. Thank you for raising the Department's bill and for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

There are an estimated 322,000 private residential wells in Connecticut that serve approximately 23% of the state's population. Semipublic wells supply drinking water to a non-residential population of less than 25 people or for less than 60 days per year, e.g., campgrounds or youth camps operating for less than 60 days per year and small businesses with less than 25 employees. There are no current requirements to test an existing private or semipublic well after the well's initial construction.

A study by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) documented the prevalence of arsenic and uranium found in private wells in Connecticut. The bill will add these two water quality parameters to the list of standard potability requirements for newly constructed private and semipublic wells, and mandate that the standard potability tests (including arsenic and uranium) be performed for all real estate transactions where such well is in use. These policies are consistent with findings of the Connecticut Water Planning Council's State Water Plan Implementation Team. Representatives of the University of Connecticut, DPH, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), local health directors and several others served on the implementation team.

The USGS Scientific Investigations Report No. 2016-5092 identified Connecticut as having a very high prevalence of potentially corrosive groundwater. Corrosive groundwater has the potential to leach lead and other metals from a home's plumbing system into the drinking water if the water is not properly treated. Including lead as a required test with the sale, exchange, transfer, or purchase of real property will allow for proper identification of elevated lead levels in the home's water supply and for mitigation strategies to be put in place to reduce the exposure of adults and children to elevated lead levels in their home drinking water supply.

This legislation will enable DPH to merge private and semipublic well water data with existing public drinking water system data to determine trends and locations with drinking water quality and quantity needs. The identification of results that warrant intervention by DPH, DEEP, and/or local health directors

will be facilitated by the enhanced collection, tracking and analysis of drinking water quality test results. Additionally, DPH will work with local public health officials and community leaders to identify possible solutions to address drinking water needs. The Department will provide local health departments and districts (LHDs) with technical assistance, water quality data, and treatment solutions for private and semipublic wells. Public education materials on the DPH webpage will continue to be updated on a routine basis to provide well owners information on water quality, health impacts, and proper maintenance of private and semipublic wells.

With this bill, the property owner, local health directors and DPH will receive water quality data from a DPH certified environmental laboratory that conducts private or semipublic well testing at the time of a real estate transaction. Potential homeowners will be informed of the water quality at the home. With this information, homeowners or potential homeowners can begin mitigation strategies to reduce the exposure risks associated with drinking water with elevated levels of contaminants, such as arsenic, uranium, and lead. Mitigation strategies include use of bottled water, installation of a treatment system, or connection to a regulated community public water system when feasible.

The Department expects that the bill's provisions will generate the submission of laboratory testing results associated with at least 10,000 wells on an annual basis. Supported by the Governor's recommended addition of one position and one-time funding to support database development, the Department looks forward to processing and analyzing these water quality test results.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. DPH encourages committee members to reach out with any questions.

Phone: (860) 509-7269
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # 13GRE, P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134
An Equal Opportunity Employer